

THE DEDICATION

CORE PASSAGE: LUKE 2:25-38

CONTEXT

According to Mosaic law, every firstborn son was to be consecrated to the Lord and redeemed with a sacrifice (Ex. 13:1-2,11-15), and every woman was to present a sacrifice in the temple a certain number of days after childbirth (Lev. 12:1-8). So Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the temple, so that even as a baby, He fulfilled every requirement of the law. At the temple, two faithful, elderly people had been waiting for the Messiah, and now they would wait no more.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the whole world.

As you examine Luke 2:25-38:

- Contemplate Simeon's identification of Jesus as God's salvation and a light for revelation to the Gentiles.
- Recognize that Anna's devotion to the Lord led her to the moment when she saw and worshiped the infant Jesus.



TIMELINE

The Angel Foretells the Birth of Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 1:26-56)

SESSION STUDY: Mary and Joseph Take Baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:21-39)

Young Jesus Remains in His Father's House (Luke 2:40-52)

Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-20)

Wise Men from the East Search for the Promised King (Matthew 2:1-12)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Luke 2:21-24
- Day 2:** Luke 2:25-32
- Day 3:** Luke 2:33-35
- Day 4:** Luke 2:36-38
- Day 5:** Luke 2:39-40
- Day 6:** Psalm 27



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

JESUS CAME TO BRING SALVATION TO JEWS AND GENTILES, BUT AT A COST (LUKE 2:25-35).

Underline all the references to the Holy Spirit.

25 There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. **26** It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. **27** Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, **28** Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said, **29** "Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace, as you promised. **30** For my eyes have seen your salvation. **31** You have prepared it in the presence of all peoples— **32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel." **33** His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. **34** Then Simeon blessed them and told his mother Mary, "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed— **35** and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Simeon was a man who loved God very much. At some point in Simeon's life, the Holy Spirit told him that he would see the Messiah before he died. We do not know how long Simeon waited to see "Israel's consolation" with his own eyes (v. 25). Maybe a matter of days; maybe decades.

LEADER NOTE: The phrase "the Holy Spirit was on [Simeon]" conveys that the Spirit was on him continually. In the Old Testament, God gave His Spirit to certain people to accomplish His will, including Bezalel (Ex. 31:1-5), Moses (Num. 11:25), Joshua (Num. 27:18), and David (1 Sam. 16:13). Nevertheless, sin could cause someone to lose God's Spirit (Judg. 16:20; 1 Sam. 16:14; cf. Ps. 51:11). After Jesus's death and resurrection, however, those who repent and trust in Jesus receive the Holy Spirit permanently (Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

Simeon had to wait to see the promised Messiah, and Israel would have to wait three decades more for their salvation to be fulfilled in Jesus's death and resurrection. Yet Jesus came to give light and hope to all men—Jew and Gentile alike.

What are you faithfully and prayerfully waiting for God to accomplish in this season of your life?

Key Concept: Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the whole world.

Simeon's reaction to seeing the Messiah is one of the most poignant moments we see in the early life of Jesus. Simeon was so satisfied that he said the Lord could "dismiss [him] in peace," meaning death, because his entire life had been leading up to that glorious moment (Luke 2:29). Nothing could surpass the satisfaction Simeon received in seeing God incarnate, the consolation of Israel and hope for the Gentiles—in short, God's salvation for the whole world.

Notes

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SALVATION: Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense, salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Yet along with the promise of Simeon's words came a dire warning. Up to this point, Mary had only heard of the salvation and hope that Jesus would bring. But Simeon warned of the opposition Jesus would face during His ministry, for which Mary too would suffer as His mother (vv. 34-35). Simeon's prophecy echoed Isaiah's prophecy of the Servant of the Lord: "But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5).

LEADER NOTE: Mary and Joseph had experienced angelic revelations (Luke 1:26-38; Matt. 1:20-25), the virgin birth (Luke 2:6-7), and the visit and testimony of the shepherds (Luke 2:16-18). Yet when Simeon held baby Jesus and prophesied, they were amazed (Luke 2:33). Perhaps in the everyday concerns of infant parents, they needed a reminder of Jesus's purpose in coming to earth. Jesus is the Messiah who would save His people from their sins at great personal cost. Mary would stand at the foot of the cross as her Savior—her Son—died to redeem her (John 19:25-30).

How have you experienced suffering as a part of God's call on your life?

SERVING GOD MEANS RECOGNIZING JESUS AS GOD'S PROMISED REDEEMER (LUKE 2:36-38).

Underline Anna's two responses to having seen Jesus in the temple.

36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, **37** and was a widow for eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers.

38 At that very moment, she came up and began to thank God and to speak about him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Perhaps no sooner had Simeon returned the infant Jesus to His mother's arms, we see another witness to Jesus's messiahship enter the scene. In the first couple of verses, we get a glimpse of Anna's godly character and devotion to the Lord's service. No doubt many religious people overlooked the birth of Jesus and didn't see anything out of the ordinary in this firstborn Son brought for dedication, but Anna was not one of them.

LEADER NOTE: Anna was from the tribe of Asher, one of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. After Israel had been conquered by Assyria in 722 BC, King Hezekiah of Judah sent letters throughout the land of Israel to anyone who might have escaped the attack, urging them to return to the Lord and worship Him faithfully (2 Chron. 30:1-12). Most of the inhabitants laughed at the couriers, but "some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (v. 11). Anna likely descended from these repentant Asherites.

Anna was an older widow. Though she lost her husband at a young age, God had blessed her with many years of life, and she had devoted those decades to the Lord's service. She could have allowed her age or widowhood to be an excuse to focus on her own needs. Yet day and night, she served God in the temple with fasting and prayers.

How have you seen those older than you serve the Lord with devotion?

Anna's loss of her husband and the subsequent difficulties of being a widow did not deter her from continuing to be faithful to the Lord, nor did these experiences hinder her ability to see the salvation of God coming into the world. Her devotion to God and His promises was rooted in the faith she had in the Word of God in spite of the sum of her circumstances.

Key Concept: Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the whole world.

Notes

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

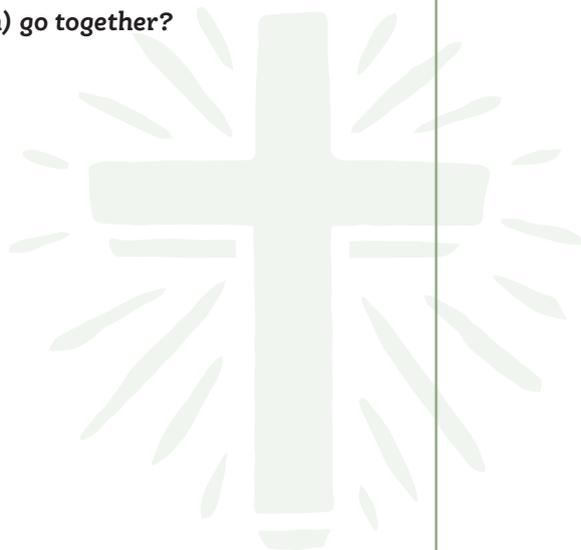
“One immediate fruit of patience is peace: A sweet tranquility of mind, a serenity of spirit that can never be found except where patience reigns. And this peace often rises into joy. Even in the midst of various temptations, those who are enabled in patience to possess their souls can witness not only quietness of spirit but triumph and exultation.”¹

—John Wesley (1703–1791)

Much in the same way the shepherds worshiped and then became proclaimers, we see the same sort of rhythm from Anna. She first thanked God at the sight of the Messiah, and then she told anyone she could about the good news she had witnessed with her own eyes (Luke 2:38).

LEADER NOTE: Since the end of the Old Testament, there had been no prophet for hundreds of years. So it is very noteworthy that God raised up Anna as a prophetess. In all the Old Testament, there were only five prophetesses mentioned: Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Isaiah’s wife (Isa. 8:3), and Noadiah—a false prophetess (Neh. 6:14). Anna may have been considered a prophetess because of her testimony of the Messiah.

Why do worship and proclamation (evangelism) go together?



GOSPEL CONNECTION

At the temple, even as an infant, Jesus was recognized as the Messiah, the One who would fulfill God’s promise of salvation.

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: Display some baby photos of your children, grandchildren, or other babies with whom you were close. As group members arrive, briefly share your relationship with those babies and how you have maintained contact with them throughout their lives. Share how those babies are now grown or growing and what kind of people they have become.

TRANSITION: When babies are born, we have high hopes for them. We want them to be healthy, happy, successful, and grow into maturity as strong adults. We watch with joy mixed with sorrow as those babies grow up and experience all the things life throws at them: success and failure, love and heartbreak, joy and sorrow. Today we're going to look at the specific hope two people found in the baby Jesus.

CONTEXT

SAY: In last week's session, we saw the announcement of Jesus's birth made by the angels and the shepherds. Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, five miles from Jerusalem. When the time was right, Joseph and Mary obeyed the law in regards to this Baby born to them (see Ex. 13:1-2,11-16; Lev. 12:1-8). Their journey to Jerusalem and the presentation of Jesus would have been the same process followed by all Jewish parents for a thousand years, but this visit to the temple was anything but expected.

RECAP

ENGAGE: Say: "In your personal preparation this week, you read about the unexpected people who prophesied and worshiped baby Jesus in the temple: Simeon and Anna." Encourage your group to describe Simeon and Anna and to share what stood out in their study this week. Ask: "If you could ask Simeon and Anna one question today, what would you ask? What do you think they would say in response?"

TRANSITION: Display **Pack Item 5: Light and Glory** and read the verse. Say: "These two elderly worshipers had devoted their lives to the Lord in faith and obedience, and on this day, they found God's reward of seeing the promised One and holding Him. Today we'll examine together the faith and obedience Simeon and Anna exhibited in our core passage."



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Notes

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 32 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will “Faith and Obedience.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with the Scripture text.

Faith and Obedience		
Read Luke 2:25-38. Record ways each person below showed their faith in God’s promises and how faith was revealed in their obedience.		
	FAITH	OBEDIENCE
SIMEON		
ANNA		

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Luke 2:25-35 aloud.

ENGAGE: Discuss with your group Simeon’s faith—what he believed—and his faithful obedience, writing down the evidence of each in the space provided. (*Simeon kept the law of Moses; he was looking for the promised Messiah; he went to the temple at the Spirit’s leading.*) Ask: “How does this description of Simeon’s faith and obedience reveal his relationship with God?”

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Luke 2:36-38 aloud.

ENGAGE: Talk through the signs of Anna’s faith as described in the passage and how it was revealed in her obedience, recording these on the chart in the appropriate spaces. (*Though a once-young and now long-time widow, Anna devoted herself to the Lord’s service; she fasted and prayed; she also was looking forward to the Messiah and testified that Jesus was the One they had been waiting for.*)

Key Concept: Jesus is the only hope of salvation for the whole world.



HANDS: Over and over in Scripture, we see God use people whose age was a liability. Abraham and Sarah were old, yet Abraham received God's promises. King Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and God used him to repair the temple and destroy the idols in the land. God can use the faithful at any age for His glory.

How will you encourage an older or younger believer in their faith this week?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Meditate on Luke 2:25-38 in the coming week, asking God to highlight one description of Jesus. Carry that description in your heart and mind as you go throughout your day.
- Consider how others might look at your life and describe your faith: How do your words and actions reflect what you know to be true about God and His salvation?
- Pray for unsaved people and missionaries, considering how God's salvation is going to the ends of the earth. Give of your time, money, and prayer as an offering to God's global ministry.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 33 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 27 with your group, focusing on verses 1-3. Thank the Lord for the gift of Jesus, our light and our salvation (v. 1), and pray for boldness for your group to share this good news with the world.

References

1. John Wesley, "On Patience" in *The Essential Works of John Wesley*, ed. Alice Russie (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2011), 389.

Notes